

***Cenchrus echinatus* L. (Poaceae): A new record for Peninsular India**

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Abstract

Cenchrus echinatus L. (Poaceae) is reported for the first time from Peninsular India. Detailed description and illustrations are provided.

INTRODUCTION

The authors, while preparing a floristic account of the Alappuzha district of Kerala State, collected an interesting specimen of the genus *Cenchrus* L. from the sandy sea-coast near Arattupuzha. It did not match with any of the species known so far from this area and is identified as *Cenchrus echinatus* L.

The genus *Cenchrus* L. has about 30 species (Mabberley, 1997) mostly distributed in warm and drier parts of America, Africa, Sri Lanka and India. It has 8 species in India (Bor, 1960) of which three, viz. *C. ciliaris* L., *C. setigerus* Vahl and *C. barbatus* Schum., are known from Peninsular India (Fischer, 1934). *C. echinatus* L. is so far known only from the northern parts of India. Bor (l.c.) stated that the only collections from India available at Kew are that of Wallich, and one "supposedly" of Wight, and that it has not been collected since those collections. As this species has not been recorded from Peninsular India, a brief description and detailed illustrations are provided to facilitate its identification.

Cenchrus echinatus L., Sp. Pl. 1050. 1753; Bor, Grass. Burma, Ceylon, India & Pakistan 289. 1960; Gould in Dassan., Fosb. & Clayton, Rev. Handb. Fl. Ceylon 8: 109. 1994 (Fig.1).

Cenchrus pungens H.B.K., Nov. Gen. & Sp. 1: 115. 1816.

Cenchrus viridis Spreng., Syst. Veg. 1: 301. 1825.

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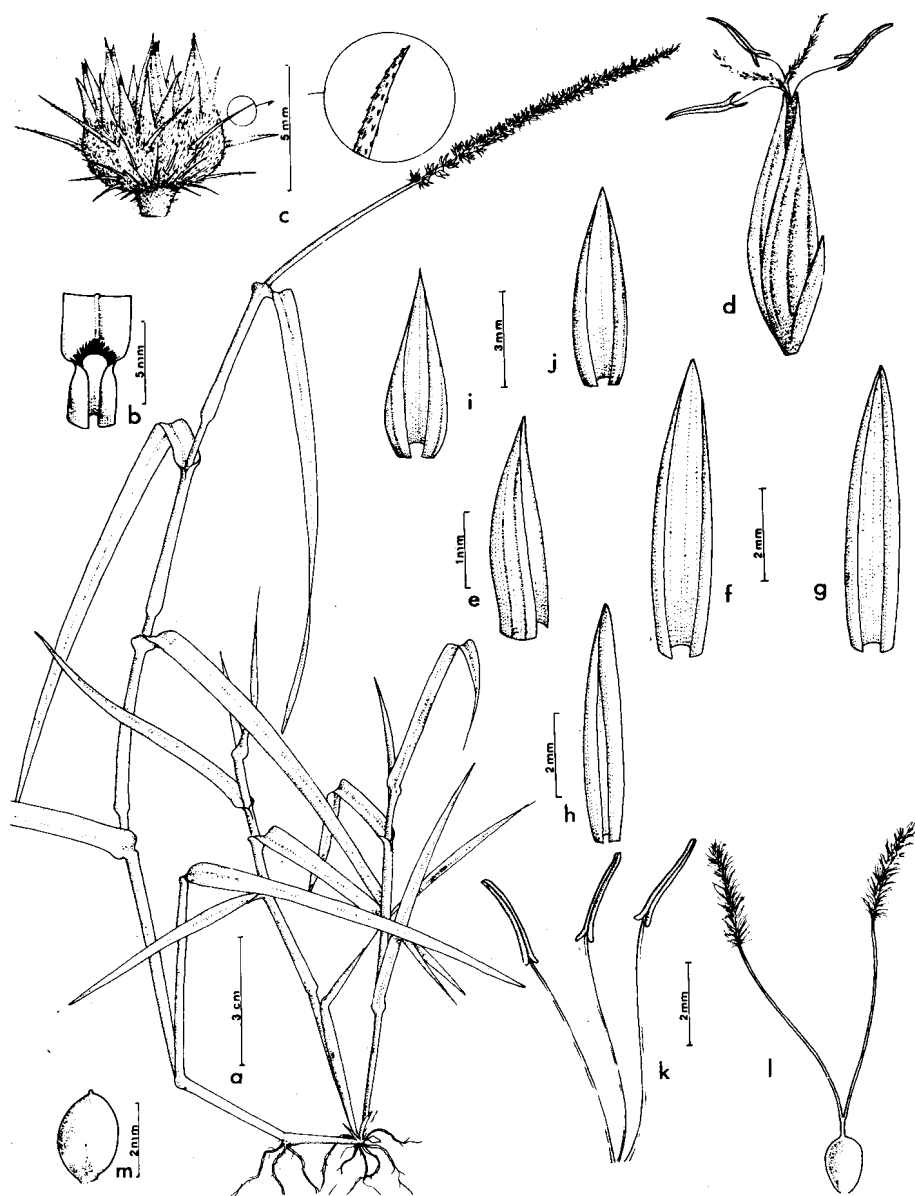


Fig. 1. *Cenchrus echinatus* L.: a. Habit; b. A portion of the leaf with ligule; c. Spikelet cluster; d. Single spikelet; e. Lower glume; f. Upper glume; g. First lemma; h. First palea; i. Second lemma; j. Second palea; k. Stamens; l. Pistil; m. Caryopsis.

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Cenchrus quinquevalvis Ham. ex Wall., Cat. 8854. 1849 (*nomen*).

Cenchrus brevisetus Fourn., Mex. Pl. 2: 50. 1886.

Annuals. Culms geniculate, 20-75 cm tall, tufted; nodes glabrous. Leaves 8-35 x 0.4-12 cm, linear-lanceolate, base rounded, apex acuminate, pilose on upper surface, scabrid on margins; sheaths keeled, to 12 cm long; ligule a row of hairs. Panicles spike-like, 4-10 cm long; rhachis angular with sharp-edged decurrent wings, puberulous. Spikelets 3-5, 6-7 mm long, enclosed by a deciduous involucre of bristles; involucre to 8 mm long; bristles unequal, outer smaller, retrorsely barbed. Lower glume c. 3 mm long, ovate, acute; upper glume c. 5 mm long, ovate-lanceolate, 3-5-nerved. Lower floret male; upper floret bisexual. First lemma 5-6 mm long, ovate-lanceolate. Palea c. 6 mm long, ovate-lanceolate, 2-nerved, delicate. Second lemma c. 6 mm long, ovate-lanceolate, acute, 5-nerved. Stamens 3; filaments 7-8 mm long. Ovary c. 1 mm long, globose; stigma plumose, c. 3 mm long, white. Grain 3-3.5 x 2.5-3 mm, ellipsoid.

Flowering and Fruiting: October - March

Distribution: Native of the warmer parts of the Americas; introduced in India and Sri Lanka. Collected from the sandy sea-coast of Alappuzha district.

Specimen examined: Kerala, Alappuzha district, Arattupuzha sea-coast, 16.10.1997 Sunil 1744 (CALI).

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- Mabberley, D.J. 1997. *The Plant-Book* (Ed. 2). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K.